

The Nation

20 Vesey Street
New York

Dear Miss Macauley

The Drifter knows no highbrow classification for Henry Thoreau. He read him most avidly at the age of eleven. His friends tell him nowadays that Thoreau had a very modern social philosophy; the Drifter was more impressed with his unsocial adventure at Walden Pond. The Drifter himself, at an early age, set out to imitate him; but his adventure lasted only a single night. Later, when the Drifter took to college, he made a pious pilgrimage to Walden Pond, which he found despicably civilized and betouristed; and to Flint's Pond, which he thought rather muddily uninteresting; and to hemlock-rimmed White Pond, which quite won his heart. Class Henry Thoreau? The Drifter has not dared try since his eleventh birthday when he started a journal that was to rival the great Henry's, and in these perspicacious words: "I have been reading Thoreau's journal this afternoon. Thoreau has such an originality. Whenever, it seems almost every time, he describes a thing in nature or in people's life, he always likens it to some point in the other one. How well he deserves the name 'Poet-Naturalist'!" ^{Could criticism go further?} The Drifter had learned that Thoreau was "poet-naturalist" from a card-game of Authors.)

The Drifter

[Oswald Garrison Villard]